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SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: 2009 COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM

REF: STATE 109980

Introduction and General Assessment

¶1. (U) In Uzbekistan, widespread poverty and pockets of discontent with the social and political situation create conditions that religious extremists could exploit. Despite potential threats, the government of Uzbekistan (GOU) maintained tight control over the security situation within Uzbekistan in ¶2009. No large scale terrorist attacks were carried out within Uzbek territory in 2009, although several assassinations and other incidents are believed to be linked to extremist groups. Terrorist groups which originated in Uzbekistan, including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) are active in other countries, including Afghanistan and Pakistan. A lack of reliable information makes it difficult to analyze the extent of the terrorist threat in Uzbekistan. Government security forces deal with terrorist threats without bringing them to the attention of the press or the international community whenever possible.

Terrorism Cases

¶2. (U) On May 26, an armed group attacked a police outpost in Andijan province, near Uzbekistan's border with Kyrgyzstan. At the same time, at least two suicide bombings took place in the city of Andijan. The IJU claimed responsibility for the attacks.

¶3. (U) On July 16, the deputy director of Tashkent's largest madrassah was murdered in front of his home. On July 31, three men attacked and stabbed the principal imam of Tashkent in front of his home, but the imam survived. On August 9, Hasan Asadov, an officer of the Directorate against Terrorism and Corruption of the Uzbek Interior Ministry, was shot and killed in his own apartment. Unconfirmed reports suggest that the three attacks were engineered by the same extremist organization.

¶4. (U) On August 29, an armed group of alleged extremists exchanged gunfire with security forces in Tashkent. Several people were killed, possibly including members of the security forces.

¶5. (U) In addition, there are periodic unconfirmed reports of border skirmishes, jail breaks, gunfire, explosions, and other

possible terrorist incidents. The government of Uzbekistan rarely releases information about any rumored incidents, but the unofficial media frequently publishes stories speculating on terrorism in Uzbekistan.

Terrorist Finance

¶6. (U) Although financing of terrorism does not appear to be a significant problem in Uzbekistan, a large and robust black market functions outside the confines of the official financial system. The unofficial, unmonitored cash-based market creates an opportunity for small-scale terrorist money laundering. In April 2009, the government of Uzbekistan responded to international concerns and passed legislation to reestablish an anti-money laundering regime that had been suspended by Presidential decree until 2013. The new legislation falls short of international standards in some areas, but represents a step forward in Uzbekistan's commitment to combat financial crimes. It is too early to fully assess the implementation and impact of the legislation.

Terrorist Groups

¶7. (U) The IMU and the IJU are terrorist groups of ethnic Uzbek origin. These groups formed with the goal of overthrowing the current Uzbek government, but Uzbek security forces appear to have effectively limited their operations in Uzbekistan. These groups have moved most of their operations to other countries in the region, although they still attempt to carry out attacks on Uzbek soil.

¶8. (U) The government of Uzbekistan is suspicious of many organized Islamic movements, some of which are clearly political or extremist, and some of which claim to have only peaceful, non-political goals. Members of organizations such as Hizb ut-Tahrir and Nur are often jailed if they are identified by Uzbek security forces.

Foreign Government Cooperation

¶9. (U) Uzbekistan cooperates with foreign governments on general security issues, including border control. Uzbekistan hosted the Central Asian Border Security Initiative (CABSI) meeting in October, 2009, for the purpose of facilitating border security cooperation within the region. Tashkent is the seat of the six-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure.

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